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SHECHEM AND BETHEL.

THE localities which have attained importance as places of public worship in the history of Israel are, for the most part, already distinguished in the oldest sacred records, and were dedicated by the founders of the nation to divine service. This is especially the case with Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba, and Jerusalem (Moriah), to all of which some measure of renown attaches in the Book of Genesis. Abraham sojourns in all these places, raises in them altars to the Lord, and is taught in theophanies that God finds pleasure in them. In the history of Isaac, Beersheba alone is distinguished by a divine appearance and by the building of an altar; while, on the other hand, in the case of Jacob, all the holy places mentioned in connection with Abraham (with the sole exception of Moriah) recur, and are consecrated afresh by means of altars, sacrifices, and memorial-stones. Bethel, however, is especially favoured by Jacob, inasmuch as it is solemnly chosen by him during his journey to Haran as a spot dedicated to God, and on his return to Canaan it is commended by express divine injunction to his religious care and loving solicitude. Accordingly, before he reaches Bethel he summons his household and all that were with him to put away the strange gods that were among them, to purify themselves, and to

change their garments.¹ Such preparations were not made in the case of Shechem, although there also an altar was erected, which bore a distinctive name,² in other words, which retained its celebrity through later ages.

In the middle books of the Pentateuch no opportunity occurs to refer to the holy places of Palestine; only in Numbers xiii. 22 Hebron is mentioned, and its antiquity emphasised. In Deuteronomy frequent mention is made of the "place which the Lord shall choose," without the name being given; in that place alone, "when Israel shall have come to his rest," should the various offerings be brought, and the second tithe be consumed. In addition to the above, the mountains Gerizim and Ebal are also frequently referred to. In Deut. xi. 29 and 30, appears the general ordinance that the blessing shall be given upon Gerizim, and the curse upon Ebal, to which the statement is added regarding the position of these two mountains, viz., that they are "on the other side (west) of Jordan, over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh." It is further prescribed in xxvii. 4-7, to set up on Mount Ebal stones plastered over with plaster, to build there an altar of stones, against which no iron tool was to be lifted up, and to offer thereon burnt offerings and peace offerings. Finally, the tribes are mentioned who were to stand upon Gerizim and Ebal in order to pronounce the blessing and the curse.

In the Book of Joshua the names of all the holy places are introduced, since abundant opportunity is presented in the account of the conquest and division of the land, and in the enumeration of the priestly and Levitical cities. Special prominence is given to Gilgal, where the stones that had been taken out of Jordan were set up, and where the Passover was observed, and in the neighbourhood of which Joshua was visited by the divine messenger, who instructed him that the place was holy; as well as to Shiloh, where the ark of the

¹ Gen. xxxv. 2.

² Ibid. xxxiii. 20.

covenant was set up, and where the division of the land among seven of the tribes took place, and the Levitical cities were selected. From this place it was that the two and a-half tribes were dismissed to their trans-Jordanic home, and here also all Israel assembled in order to go up to war against them on account of their supposed breach of faith. The greatest distinction accrues to Shechem and its environs. Directly after the conquest of Ai the altar is built upon Mount Ebal, upon which were offered burnt and peace offerings. Upon the stones there set up Joshua writes the copy of the Law of Moses, and to the Israelites—half of whom took up their position upon Mount Gerizim, and half upon Mount Ebal—the blessings and the curses are delivered by the priests.¹ Shechem also becomes one of the Cities of Refuge. There, before his death, Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel, made a covenant with them, “set them a statute and an ordinance,” “wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of Yahveh.” The bones of Joseph are buried in Shechem, in a field which Jacob had already acquired.²

Bethel is manifestly placed in the background in the book of Joshua; not a single sacred function is there transacted; no assembly takes place there; mention of this place is only made for the purpose of geographically defining the position of Ai and of the ambush laid against that city,³ as also in order to show the participation of the inhabitants of Bethel in the pursuit of the Israelites fleeing from Ai,⁴ and to determine the limits of the territories of the children of Joseph and Benjamin.⁵ The king of Bethel is also mentioned among the thirty-one kings vanquished by the Israelites.⁶ To the Levitical cities Bethel does not belong.

In the chief (*i.e.*, central) portion of the book of Judges,

¹ Josh. viii. 30, *seq.*

² Ibid. xxiv. 26, *seq.*

³ Ibid. vii. 2; viii. 9, 12; xii. 9.

⁴ Ibid. viii. 17.

⁵ Ibid. xvi. 1: xviii. 13.

⁶ Ibid. xii. 16.

of the recognised localities for public worship, only Gilgal and Mizpah, in Gilead, are alluded to as holy places,¹ while of Shechem it is stated that a temple of Baal-Berith existed there.² The appearance of an angel at Ophrah, and the erection of an altar, which continued to exist for a long while, are likewise reported.³ In Zorah, in the tribe of Dan, an angel appears, in whose honour an offering is brought.⁴ In the introduction to the book of Judges, on the other hand, Bethel is especially mentioned as a place dedicated to God besides Mizpah and Shiloh, and seems almost to serve as a religious centre for the Israelites. Here all Israel assembles to ask counsel of God, which tribe should lead the attack against the Benjamites on account of the wickedness wrought at Gibeah. After the defeats repeatedly suffered by them at the hands of the Benjamites, they again hold a solemn assembly in Bethel, and offer there burnt and peace-offerings. There, too, the Ark of the Covenant is located at that time. After the complete overthrow of Benjamin the tribes return again to Bethel. Finally, the geographical situation of Shiloh is fixed with reference to Bethel.⁵

In the first book of Samuel Shiloh alone is at first spoken of as a holy place; but after the capture of the Ark by the Philistines the importance of Shiloh, which, indeed, was probably destroyed, vanishes completely—for the words כהן יהוה בשילה (1 Sam. xiv. 3) are, according to the Vulgate, the Syriac, as well as Abarbanel, de Wette, Ewald, etc., to be taken as in apposition to the word עלי immediately preceding, and are not to be referred, with the LXX., the Targum, Luther, and Maybaum, to ואחיה at the beginning of the verse. The Shilonic priesthood is again met with at Nob, and Ahimelech (in chapters xxi. and xxii.) is identical with Ahiah. Besides Nob, Gilgal, Mizpah, Bethel, and Ramah are mentioned;⁶ in all these

¹ Judges ii. 11; xi. 11, 29, 34.

² Ibid. ix. 4.

³ Ibid. vi. 12, 24.

⁴ Ibid. xiii. 3, *seq.*

⁵ Ibid. xx. 18, 26, 27; xxi. 2. 19.

⁶ 1 Sam. vii. 16, 17; x. 3; xi. 15.

places altars are found, upon which sacrifices are brought.¹ Shechem is nowhere spoken of.

In the second book of Samuel, besides Jerusalem, only Hebron is alluded to as a holy city, and from xv. 7 and 8 the inference may be drawn that Hebron was a holy city, especially chosen, at least by the tribe of Judah, as a place for the fulfilment of vows. On the summit of the Mount of Olives there also existed a sacrificial site.²

In the first book of Kings Gibeon is at first called "the great Bamah," upon which Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings, and where, in a vision, he was honoured by a divine manifestation. Shiloh is mentioned as the dwelling place of the prophet Ahijah; Shechem is the place of assembly for all Israel after the death of Solomon, and, at least in the early period, the residence of the king of the Ten Tribes.³ Nothing is said of any sacrificial site being there. On the other hand, Bethel becomes, immediately after the division of the empire, the chief sanctuary for the Northern Kingdom. Here a high place is set up, and king Jeroboam offers sacrifices upon the altars, the future profanation of which by Josiah is then predicted.⁴ Altars upon high places are also found in other cities, Dan in the extreme north being especially mentioned as a frequently-visited place of pilgrimage.⁵ In Samaria a temple and an altar to Baal are erected,⁶ and on Mount Carmel there is an altar dedicated to Yahveh, which was demolished under the rule of Ahab, and was restored by Elijah.⁷

¹ The LXX. translate the words in 1 Sam. vii. 16, את כל המקומות האלה; ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἁγιασμένοις τοῖς τόποις, reading therefore מקדשים instead of מקומות. Bethel is also enumerated in 1 Sam. xxx. 27, among the cities to whose inhabitants David sent of the spoil; here, however, instead of Bethel we ought to read Bethzur, with the LXX., which reading appears also to be justified by the expression לְזִקְנֵי יְהוּדָה, used in the preceding verse (see also Thenius, *Die Bücher Samuels*, p. 136).

² 2 Sam. xv. 32.

³ 1 Kings iii. 4, 5; xi. 29; xii. 1, 25.

⁴ Ibid. xii. 32; xiii. 1. *seq.*

⁵ Ibid. xii. 29, 30.

⁶ Ibid. xvi. 32.

⁷ Ibid. xviii. 30.

In the second book of Kings repeated mention is made of the sons of the prophets at Jericho and Bethel.¹ Carmel, Samaria, Jericho and Gilgal are the most notable places of sojourn of Elisha.² Jehu destroys the temple of Baal in Samaria, and eradicates Baal-worship, but allows the golden calves to remain at Bethel and Dan.³ The Israelitish priest whom the king of Assyria sent to Samaria at the request of the colonists takes up his abode in Bethel.⁴ Josiah destroys the altar and the Bamah, and slays the priests who performed the service in that place.⁵

In Hosea Bethel is often mentioned, being at times cacophemistically called Beth-aven.⁶ Gilgal also frequently appears as a place of sacrifice.⁷ The calf image of Samaria is several times mentioned,⁸ but it appears as though by Samaria, in these passages, not simply the capital, but rather the land of Israel is meant, as indeed in other Biblical books occasionally the cities of Samaria are spoken of.⁹ Whether Shechem is referred to in Hosea, depends upon the interpretation of the peculiar passage to be discussed below *ירדן ירצחו שְׂכָמָה* (vi. 9 *seq.*).

In dealing with the sanctuaries of Israel, Amos speaks with emphasis of Bethel, which he calls *מקדש מלך*, and characterises as an oft-visited place of pilgrimage, and even as the actual religious centre of the northern kingdom.¹⁰ Next to this, prominence is given to Gilgal and Beersheba as well as to the Sin (or the idol) of Samaria.¹¹

In Jeremiah only the passage xli. 5, *יבאו אנשים משכם*

¹ 2 Kings ii. 3, 5.

² Ibid. ii. 18, 25; iv. 38.

³ Ibid. x. 26-29.

⁴ Ibid. xvii. 28.

⁵ Ibid. xxv. 15-19.

⁶ Hosea iv. 15; x. 5, 8; xii. 5.

⁷ Ibid. iv. 15; xii. 12.

⁸ Ibid. viii. 5, 6.

⁹ 2 Kings xvii. 27; Hosea x. 5; Amos iv. 1; vi. 1, etc.

¹⁰ Amos iii. 14; iv. 4; v. 5, 6.

¹¹ Ibid. iv. 4; v. 5; viii. 14. On Beersheba, in Amos, comp. Halevy, *Recherches Bibliques*, 3rd fascicule, who maintains the well-founded view that it is not Beersheba in the south of the kingdom of Judah that can here be meant, but a place of pilgrimage situated in the Northern Kingdom, forming a sort of annex to the great sanctuary in Bethel, and perhaps identical with *בִּצְאוֹת*, the present Biré.

משלו ומשמרון, and the threat that it should fare with Jerusalem as it did with Shiloh, אשר שכנרי שמי שם בראשונה, are noteworthy;¹ no other holy places are named. Mention is made in the Psalms also of the sanctuary at Shiloh, which was rejected by God on account of the sins of Israel:² otherwise there is no allusion, as in the other books of the Bible, to any holy places except Jerusalem.

From the passages above quoted it clearly follows that Bethel was in pre-exilic times, or at least after the division of the kingdom, the most important sanctuary of the central and northern tribes of Israel, and that it maintained its high rank even after the dissolution of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, until Josiah desecrated the altars there, and executed a direful judgment upon the officiating priesthood of that place.

It must appear remarkable that the book of Joshua makes no reference whatever to Bethel as a sanctified spot, and—such is the impression an unbiassed reader cannot fail to receive—*purposely* maintains silence regarding its importance for the religious development of Israel. The contrast between Joshua on the one hand and the other historical books of the Bible as well as Hosea and Amos on the other, stands out all the more distinctly as in Joshua, side by side with the neglect of Bethel, the prominence of Shechem is remarkably conspicuous. The preference for Shechem and the aversion to Bethel, go so far that, directly after the conquest of Ai, which is adjacent to Bethel, the altar is built upon Ebal, the blessing and the curse commanded in Deuteronomy are then pronounced, and the copy of the law of Moses is engraved upon the stones there set up. The passage in Joshua (viii. 30 to end) gives much trouble to the expositors, as it cannot be harmonised with historical facts and with the position of Israel. Some therefore

¹ Jer. vii. 12, 14; xxvi. 6. 9.

² Psalm lxxviii. 60.

incline towards the opinion that the passage has found its way by error into its present place, and should have been inserted at a later point, since after the conquest of Ai, the camp was still in Gilgal.¹ The LXX. do in fact place this passage after the second verse of chapter ix., whereby, however, not much is gained, for the camp still continues in Gilgal, though the possibility remains that, after the conquest of Ai, other acts of war occurred before Joshua set about the building of the altar upon Ebal; that, in particular, that portion of the land in which Shechem lay had already fallen into the power of the Israelites, but that the army after each action withdrew to the fortified camp at Gilgal.²

Now one might perhaps assume that the silence concerning Bethel in the Book of Joshua is caused by the fact that this place, during the early period of the seizure of the country by the Israelites, was of no importance for purposes of public worship, and that it only later came into prominence; and that, therefore, the author of the Book of Joshua could have had no inducement to assign any importance to Bethel. This, however, is contradicted by the weightiest circumstances, chiefly the tolerably early narrative in chapters xx. and xxi. of the Book of Judges; further, by the plain and artless statement in 1 Sam. x. 3, evidently written without any preconceived motive, and especially by the distinguished position assigned to Bethel in Genesis, indicating the great age and the pre-eminent significance of the worship there conducted. Moreover, no doubt can obtain respecting the post-Deuteronomic composition of the Book of Joshua; and the assumption that the author, who lived after the destruction by Josiah of the sanctuary at Bethel, was

¹ Josh. ix. 6; xi. 6, 7, 15, 43.

² Josh. x. 15, 43. Some codices of the LXX. follow the order of the Hebrew text, from which it may with certainty be inferred that the variation in the other codices is due to a later correction, the grounds for which are obvious.

ignorant of the important part which this place played in the development of the ancient Israelitish worship, is absolutely untenable. If, therefore, no mention is made in Joshua of Bethel as a holy place, the author must have had excellent reasons of his own—reasons so excellent that he was induced by them to place himself in opposition to historic facts, and also to the historic consciousness of his contemporaries.

These reasons it ought not to be difficult to discover. When the Book of Joshua was written, Bethel's prime was long passed, for through the dissolution of the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, it had ceased to be the central point of the Northern Israelitish worship, and the most dangerous rival of Jerusalem ; but it was nevertheless, as we perceive from 2 Kings xxiii. 4, 15—19, until late in the reign of Josiah, despite the preponderance of Jerusalem, a much-visited place of pilgrimage, and the greatest hindrance to the unity of worship ; and the terrible punishment inflicted by Josiah on the priests of Bethel, as well as the desecration of the altars at Bethel under circumstances that aroused so great a sensation, was still fresh in the memory of the people. However, the author of the Book of Joshua, whose wish is to date back the unity of public worship to the time of the seizure of Palestine by Israel, has as his object to destroy the halo which was spread over Bethel, and to oppose the notion that this place had at any time, however distant, held a specially favoured position. More effectually than by any polemic against Bethel, or by any narrative that might degrade its sanctity (which would, moreover, having regard to what is written in Genesis, have been ill-applied), this aim was reached by completely ignoring the place and passing it over in absolute silence. If the supporters of the decentralisation of public worship, of whom there must have been many at the time of the composition of the Book of Joshua—for otherwise the twenty-second chapter of this book, which is in direct conflict with every historical fact, would be entirely super-

fluous and incomprehensible—appealed to the patriarchal age against the exclusive favouring of Jerusalem, and placed particular emphasis upon the example of Bethel, which had been so greatly distinguished by Abraham and Jacob; then from the Book of Joshua it could be proved against them that, at all events in the earliest period of the Israelitish nationality, not a word was said by way of sanctioning the holiness of this place; that at that time already the exclusive limitation of sacrificial worship to the spot where the Ark of the Covenant was situated was presupposed as a matter of course; that on the mere suspicion of the Transjordanic tribes having erected an altar for sacrifice, in addition to the only legitimate one at Shiloh, all Israel had assembled as one man to punish such infidelity, which might have had the same sad consequences for the nation at large as the sin of Israel in adoring Baal-Peor, or as the trespass of Achan.¹

True, the book of Joshua cannot ignore the fact that *before* the setting up of the Ark of the Covenant, and the rearing of the Tabernacle at Shiloh, sacrifices were offered at other places; for it contradicts the conception of piety prevalent at the time of the composition of this book to suppose that the Israelites abstained from bringing sacrifices of any kind during their long-extended war of conquest. But that was not necessary according to the express statement in Deuteronomy,² and this view was also sustained in later ages.³ But though a temporary sanctity is conceded to other places of public worship, and they thus appear in the character of forerunners of Shiloh and Jerusalem, they must, nevertheless, have been such places as seemed innocuous to the Deuteronomist and to

¹ Josh. xxii. 11, *seq.*

² Deut. xii. 9.

³ The Talmud also explains, *Meg.* 10a and *Sebachim* 119b, that the expression מנוחה (Deut. xii. 9) refers to Shiloh and נחלה to Jerusalem, and lays down the following general proposition (*Seb.* 112b and elsewhere):—עד שלא הוקם המישכן היו הבמות מותרות, ומישהוקם המישכן נאסרו הבמות, באו לגלגל הותרו הבמות, באו לשילה נאסרו הבמות, באו

his successor, the Deuteronomistic author of the book of Joshua, that is to say, they must have been places which, at the time of the composition of these books, no longer entered into any kind of rivalry with Jerusalem, but had then already entirely lost their significance, and were of value only as an historical reminiscence. This is true of Shechem especially. Since the days of Jeroboam I., Shechem, which, after the death of Solomon, had been the principal place for the tribes dwelling in the northern and middle portion of Palestine, had completely lost its former leading position in Israel. Already, before the building of Samaria, it had sunk into insignificance, for Tirzah had become the capital of the kingdom, and the residence of the king; in the last years of his reign, Jeroboam had removed his place of abode to Tirzah, and all the kings who succeeded him also dwelt there until Omri built the new capital, Samaria, upon a site strongly fortified by nature. Thus Shechem soon lost its place of honour, and it receives in the writings which deal with the period after Jeroboam I., scarcely any further mention.

The two passages which do not seem in agreement with this conclusion (Hosea vi. 9, and Jer. xli. 5), are nothing to the purpose. In the first passage, to which reference has already been made above, it is very questionable whether by שְׁכֶמָה is to be understood "to Shechem" (for which everywhere else שֶׁכֶמָה is used), or whether, as the LXX. assume, a man named שְׁכֶמָה is meant, or whether, according to the Targum, and most of the Jewish commentators, it is to be understood not as a proper name, but to be translated by "with one consent" = שֶׁכֶם אחד (Zeph. iii. 9).

לנוב ונבעון הותרו הבמות , באו לירושלים נאסרו הבמות ולא היה להן
 היתר והיא היתה נחלה. The Talmud was hardly likely to have made a
 difference between Shiloh on the one hand and Nob and Gilead on the
 other, if Joshua xxii. had not compelled it to do so, for the offerings of
 Gideon and of Manoah, which were not brought to Shiloh, gave the
 Talmud a great deal of trouble, and forced it to the makeshift explana-
 tion of הוראת י'עה.

And Jer. xli. 5, where it is related that eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, showing signs of mourning, and bearing offerings, came to Mizpah in order to bring their presents to the house of the Lord, proves absolutely nothing as regards the importance of Shechem, or proves rather (assuming the passage not to be corrupt) that the inhabitants of Shechem, even after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, did not offer their gifts to the Deity in their own city, but undertook the journey to Judah in order to give expression to their pious sentiments; that, therefore, Shechem itself had ceased to be a Holy Place to them, and had lost all its value as a seat of public worship.¹

Bethel, on the other hand, although its temple had been destroyed by Josiah, still continued to enjoy the fame of its sanctity, and under the rule of Jehoiakim, when the other high places and sites of public worship again revived, became once more a much-frequented place of pilgrimage. The nation could and would not accustom itself to the idea that the place, solemnly consecrated by the patriarchs, and marked by prophets and men of God as a spot chosen by God, should be unsuited for worship and for the bringing of sacrifices. In the minds of the people all the signs of divine grace which had been there manifested still clung to Bethel; and like Jacob when he awoke from his dream, so

¹ Graetz (*loc. cit.*) correctly assumes that the cities named were then in ruins. Samaria, which was conquered by the Assyrians after a siege of three years, was certainly destroyed, as it was not in accordance with the policy of the Assyrians to allow a city of such eminent strategic importance to continue standing after the deportation of its inhabitants, and it is not likely that at the time of the composition it had already been restored by the colonists there settled. Shiloh, also, if the reading in our place be the correct one (and we do not adopt the reading of the LXX., Salem), had in Jeremiah's days entirely lost its sanctity, and served as a warning example of the divine judgment (Jer. xxvi.). And Shechem, which had become of extremely slight importance *during* the existence of the kingdom of Israel, sank probably into still greater insignificance *after* its fall.

Israel said of Bethel, "How awful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

On this account it was that the author of Joshua considered himself bound to entirely pass over Bethel, for he, the enthusiastic upholder of the unity of public worship, dared not concede as much even as the appearance of legality to a city which offered the greatest impediment to the centralisation of worship, since such concession could only serve to increase its halo and to give a certain justification to its fame as a sanctuary. Therefore also, directly after the conquest of Ai and Bethel, the altar had to be erected upon Mount Ebal, and the ordinance of Deuteronomy (xi. 29 *seq.* and xxvii. 4, *seq.*) had to be carried out, although the conquest of this portion of Canaan was not yet in any way under discussion and the environs of Shechem could not have yet come into the possession of Israel. The author boldly dismisses this consideration, as well as the actual impossibility of instituting important solemnities connected with public worship in a portion of the land not yet conquered, for he is influenced by the thought that the surmise might easily occur to the reader that the first sojourn of Israel in the vicinity of Bethel, sanctified as it had been from the times of the patriarchs, must have been used for the performance of holy functions on that memorable spot. Such a surmise the author of the book of Joshua wished to prevent at any cost; and he wished to show that Joshua, a man distinguished for his fear of God, who acted strictly in accordance with the directions of his teacher Moses, passed with indifference over Bethel; that he, immediately after the conquest of Ai, took the road to Shechem, in order to build an altar upon Mount Ebal and to pronounce there the blessing and the curse over Israel.

Shechem (such is the result of an impartial investigation) has been made prominent in Deuteronomy, and still more so in Joshua, at the cost of Bethel, and owes such distinction as is accorded to it in these books solely to the insignificance into which it at that time had sunk, and in

consequence of which it could not but appear innocuous for the restoration and maintenance of the unity of worship ; while Bethel, in spite of all the measures applied against it, maintained its position until the dissolution of the kingdom of Judah, and was deemed worthy of reverence by a large portion of the nation.

The preference accorded to Shechem with this intent, for the sake of a pious and highly important object, was bitterly avenged in succeeding ages ; for this town, which after the fall of the house of Jeroboam, almost disappears from the remembrance of Israel, which to the Deuteronomist is not even of sufficient consequence to serve as a means of indicating the geographical situation of the mountains Gerizim and Ebal, and which therefore, in this respect, had to give way even to Gilgal and the plains of Moreh,¹ became later the capital and the religious centre of the Samaritans, who were the bitterest foes of the Jews, and whose temple on Gerizim contested the right of the sanctuary upon Moriah to be the holy spot chosen by God for his dwelling place. In vain did the Jews point to the books of Kings and the later prophets in order to demonstrate the sanctity and the selection of Jerusalem, and to distinguish Zion as the incomparable city of God, before which all the other temporary holy places became of no account. The Samaritans refused to recognise these biblical books, which were, in their view, coloured by an obvious tendency, nay actually falsified ; and they referred on behalf of their Shechem to Genesis, to Deuteronomy, and especially to the book of Joshua, which, owing to the celebrity and prominence in it of Shechem, had a special value for them, and formed, as it were the foundation upon which they reared their religious edifice. The Jews were forced to admit the prominence of Shechem in Joshua, as this book was considered by them too as holy, and as penetrated with the true prophetic spirit ; they asserted only that by the build-

¹ Deut. xi. 30.

ing of the temple of Solomon, all previous sanctuaries became illegal, and that thus also Shechem lost its distinction; for Deuteronomy limits the bringing of sacrifices to the place "which God shall choose," and by this place no other city than Jerusalem is meant. But this very thing the Samaritans contested most emphatically, and asserted the opposite view, that Shechem was the city referred to in Deuteronomy as chosen by God, and that Jerusalem had usurped a right to which Shechem had the sole claim.

At any rate, by his extravagant exaltation of Shechem, the author of the book of Joshua, who had nothing so much at heart as the promotion of unity of worship, and who for this reason ruthlessly abridged the rights of Bethel, still standing in high regard with the people, and refused to recognise the sanctity of this place even in the past, offered to the opponents of Jerusalem in post-exilic times a convenient handle whereby to make of the old Ephraimite city a rival of the city of David, to oppose the Mount of Gerizim to the Mount of Moriah, and thus in a sense to again prejudice the unity of public worship in the future.

The aversion to Bethel must have been very great and lasting among the pious of Israel, for, even after the Exile, the remembrance of the ancient bull-worship at Bethel was avoided, and care was taken, when the name of this place had to be mentioned, to shun all reference to its former religious importance. Therefore we do not find Bethel mentioned in the lists (dating from after the Exile) of the forty-eight Levitical cities, in Joshua¹ and Chronicles,² while Shechem, being a city of refuge, was at the same time a Levitical city.

That Joshua xxi. is not the work of the original author of the book, but belongs to a later time, is evident from its strictly-maintained distinction between priests and Levites, which we nowhere meet with in any of the other chapters of Joshua. The author of Joshua, following

¹ Josh. xxi.

² 1 Chron. vi.

the example of the Deuteronomist, often makes use of the expression, *הכהנים הלויים*, for priests, or calls them simply *כהנים*. The appellation *לויים* alone never appears except in chapter xxi. Clearly the author knows no Levites in contradistinction to priests; for him there are only Levite priests. Each priest must belong to the tribe of Levi; but every Levite is also, *eo ipso*, a priest. Levites as priests' assistants, as ministers to the *כהנים*, to whom only a lower degree of holiness attaches, are totally unknown to him. As in Deuteronomy, so in Joshua; the priests bear the Ark of the Covenant, not the Levites, to whom, in Numbers, this office of honour is expressly transferred. The *כהנים* also, in several places, have the title, "Bearers of the Ark of the Covenant." The high priest is mentioned once;¹ but the passage is undoubtedly a later interpolation.²

In no work demonstrably pre-Exilic (except in interpolated or corrupted passages³) are there Levites as distinguished from priests. This distinction we encounter for the first time in Ezekiel.⁴ Still later occurs the triple division of the Levites according to the heads of their houses—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, of which even the books of Ezra and Nehemiah know nothing as yet, and which we only meet with in Numbers, Chronicles, and chapter xxi. of Joshua.⁵ In the enumeration of the

¹ Josh. xx. 6.

² Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des alten Testaments*, p. 68.

³ 1 Sam. vi. 15; 1 Kings viii. 4; also compare each time the previous verse.

⁴ Ezek. xlv. 10.

⁵ It is true that in Ezra viii. 19, a Levite is mentioned who was "of the sons of Merari," but in the preceding verse, at the mention of another Levite, his descent from "the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi," is emphasised, that is to say, Mahli and Merari are both used as Levitical family names, and Merari is not here employed as the name of the third division of Levites, as otherwise the description "of the sons of Mahli" would be incomprehensible, since, according to Numbers, Mahli himself belongs to the Merarites, and cannot, therefore, be conceived as introduced in contradistinction to the sons of Merari.

Levitical cities in Joshua xxi., this trichotomy of the tribe of Levi is strictly observed, and to each section of the Levites, in proportion to its higher or lower rank, dwelling-places are assigned at a smaller or greater distance from Jerusalem. All the Aaronites were located in the kingdom of Judah, in the territories of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin; the other Kohathites received ten cities—first among which was the City of Refuge, Shechem—in the districts of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and West Manasseh. Bethel, however, will be looked for in vain among the Levitical cities; and the fact that this holy place, once so celebrated, is passed over in silence, can only be explained by the aversion, surviving even after the Exile, against the ancient rival of Jerusalem.

One might, perhaps, urge against my contention that other cities, which had previously formed a certain centre for public worship, are also not included among the Levitical cities, especially Shiloh, which is brought several times into prominence in Joshua, and to which a peculiar distinction attaches as the seat of the Ark of the Covenant; similarly Nob, which was the foremost sanctuary in Israel during the time of Samuel and Saul, whither also on that account the most valuable trophies were brought.¹ However, there was another excellent reason for passing over Shiloh and Nob. Both places being priests' cities, inhabited by Aaronites, could not have been referred to as Levitical cities in the narrower sense of the word; for the legality of the sacrificial and priestly service of those places is nowhere disputed, and the priests officiating at these sanctuaries are the ancestors of Abiathar, the founder of the family of the priests at Anathoth. But the priests, according to the scheme enunciated in Chronicles, were to be settled in the later southern kingdom, at not too great a distance from Jerusalem; and into this system, of course, Shiloh and Nob do not enter. In this respect the

¹ 1 Sam. xxi. 10.

Chronicler made things remarkably easy for himself; for him Shiloh and Nob simply do not exist. He begins his history of public worship with David's removal of the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem.¹ How the Ark reached Kirjath-jearim, where it was previously kept, he does not relate. Bounded by no restrictions, he is able to present a tableau of the Levitical cities entirely according to his own fancy, and has, therefore, not the least compunction in settling all the Aaronites in the southern portion of Canaan. The author of Joshua xxi. has thus simply borrowed the list of Levitical cities from Chronicles, and inserted it in Joshua; although, by the omission of Shiloh, he puts himself in opposition to the body of the book, which tells of the setting-up of the Ark at Shiloh, and recognises the altar built there as the only legitimate one.² If another proof be needed that Josh. xxi. is post-exilic, it is furnished irrefutably by the omission of Shiloh. This chapter can only have originated in a period in which the historical recollections of the past had already so faded away in the minds of the people that a seat of worship once so celebrated as Shiloh, the importance of which in the past even Jeremiah fully acknowledges,³ might be refused the rank conceded even to quite obscure cities in Israel.

But what inducement moved the interpolator or redactor of the Book of Joshua to introduce the list of the Levitical cities, when such a step must have caused him great difficulties in respect to Nob, and more especially to Shiloh? The answer to this question is not far to seek. The inducement to this addition was Num. xxxv., in which the distinct ordinance is given to grant the Levites forty-eight cities, inclusive of the Cities of Refuge, from all parts of Israel; it must, therefore, have appeared strange to post-exilic Judaism that Joshua, who complied so precisely with the Deuteronomic command to put the blessing and

¹ 1 Chron. xiii. 15.² Josh. xviii. 1; xxii. 19.³ Jer. vii. 12.

the curse on the mountains Gerizim and Ebal, and who had assigned their territory to the nine and a half tribes of Israel by lot, as it was prescribed, should have completely forgotten the Levites, and should have passed over the commands concerning them unnoticed. That would never do; the Chronicler, with his pronounced Levitical sympathies, or else some contemporary who shared his sentiments, had to make this good, and that was done in the simplest fashion by the insertion of the list from Chronicles, which fully corresponded with post-exilic views—a list whose origin was then referred back to Joshua. But what inconsistencies arose from such a procedure can best be seen from the allotments assigned to the priests. The Aaronites, namely, received thirteen cities within the territory of the southern tribes. What the priestly clan, which at the time of Joshua consisted of but a few persons, viz., Eleazar and Ithamar, and their sons and grandsons, were to do with thirteen cities is a question which the narrator leaves unanswered, as also how it was in accordance with justice that the other Kohathites, whose number at the census in the wilderness of Sinai amounted already to 8,600, were to be content with ten cities; that the Gershonites with their 7,500 were to receive exactly as many cities as the little band of Aaronites, and, finally, that the Merarites, who are reported as numbering 6,200, obtained only twelve cities.¹

It is obvious that the author of this list transfers the conditions of his time to the remote past, or to speak more accurately, that he remodels the past according to his Levitico-priestly ideal, which was never realised in fact, and thereby commits, in dealing with the Aaronites, the most frightful anachronism one can imagine. But, however much he may differ from the author or authors of the

¹ In Num. xxvi. 62, the sum-total of the Levites from a month old and upwards is given as a thousand more, viz., 23,000, instead of the sum-total of 22,000, mentioned in Num. iii. 39.

other constituent parts of the Book of Joshua, he nevertheless shares with them that aversion against Bethel, which since the days of Josiah was deeply rooted in all the pious circles of Israel, although in his time all thought of a rivalry between Bethel and Jerusalem was excluded, and it entered nobody's mind to revive the fallen glory and sanctity of Bethel on the ground of what was related in Genesis and in other pre-exilic books.

H. VOGELSTEIN.
